THE POCAHONTAS TIMES

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CALVIN W. PRICE, Editor.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25 1924

The Covered Wagon was given at the Seneca Theater last week to five full houses affording mental stimulus to several thousand persons. From here the drama was taken too Cass where it was played to crowded houses. The cost to each person was fifty cents and the entertainment counted up to a tidy sum, but no more than some flush pioneer might spend in a single trip to Broadway to take a course in drama, the book of the people.

The moving pictures supply the highest dramatic touches. It must be admitted that there are a few gifted persons with charming voices and deep understanding that put life into words. but their field is very limited and they are bound to play to a limited audience. The moving pictures have come into every county and after a few false starts the institution showed itself capable of the highest art. I can remember when habitual readers were regarded as queer. "He has read so many books that he has injured his mind!" That was agreed in the solemn conclave around the stove in the village store, and many a worthy man and high class citizen has thanked God that he had not become an addict to reading

I remember one very sad case. A small farmer lived in this county about forty years ago. As I recall it he did not own his farm but was a tenant on land belonging to some non-reader. I went forth to teach school and took with me a handful of books. One of the books that I had was H. Rider Haggard's "She" This was a fantastic tale of adventure, wonderfully popular. At the farm where I boarded, the work was considerably behindhand and this tenant on the farm in the neighborhood had come on the urgent business of getting the corn in as a day laborer, He came before breakfast and picked up the book and started to read it and instead of going to the field sat by the fire place and read all day. I went to my school and when I got home that evening I found the farm humming with indignation, and I got a little of the blame such as might attach to a third person who had brought liquor on the works and corrupted the labor. The reasoning was clear why the man was poor But to my mind this reader who had floated away on the wings of the wind to the islands of the blest had something better than gold.

In those days I knew a good many wise men who could not read nor write. Their fine minds had been developed by thought and observation, perhaps in their narrow lines to greater heights than if they had been educated. But they had missed much pleasure and satisfaction.

The advent of county papers and free schools made the art of reading more or less universal, but it is the moving pictures that make young and enthusiastic readers. Such a thing as a young one who has not got education enough to follow the moving picture is unknown in this day, and I am puzzled to know how much credit is due to our expensive and improved school system, and how much credit is due the moving picture theater.

Emerson Hough, the author of The Covered Wagon, is said to be kin to the West Virginia families of the same name. It is pronounced huff. In Morgantown, there is a family of this name among the oldest settlers: A member of this family is a great scientist one of the head men of the Smithsonian Institute. I never met Emerson Hough but some twenty odd years ago when I was a contributor to the Forest and Stream, he was a weekly writer for that magazine and that was the first that I had ever heard of him. He made writing his profession and was soon issuing books and his writings were greatly valued for their historical value and for the ability he showed as a naturalist.

At the time of his death a few years ago, he was engaged in producing a series of three books. The Covered Wagon, North of 36, and the Tall Men. He died after finishing the second book. That the Tall Men was never wrrtten is a great loss to us of these mountains for it had to do with the pioneers that crossed the Alleghenies. The Covered Wagon developed the crossing of the plains. North of 36, had to do with the drifting of cattie hundreds of miles from Texas to the new market afforded by building of the Union Pacific. The Tall Men would have shown the advent of the white men in the wooded wildernesses of western Virginia.

The play North of 36 will be produced here in time and it will prove to be of the greatest interest. I saw it at Fairmont in November. It is produced by the same talent that develops The Covered Wagon so effectually. It was the evening of Thanksgiving Day. I had seen some supermen play football at Morgantown that day, and had seen great exhibitions of skill, strength and endurance but after all it was but a game. I went to the show with a friend of mine. Scott C. Lowe, Jr, of Fairmont. We had both seen The Covered Wagon and had read the book, and were prepared to take an intelligent interest in the production then about to be had. Scott calls my attention to the criticism certain army officers made of the Covered Wagon, without prejudice however. One was that the pioneers would not camp in a pocket canyon and suffer an attack by the Indians in that kind of a trap. Perhaps not, but there is one feature in the book and that is to show that the Wingate part of the train was always doing foolish things. Another was that Jim Bridger as portrayed is made out to be a drunken trapper and living with two Indian squaws. This is art but it does a grave injustice to a very fine citizen. Jim Bridger, as shown by his biographer, Gen Dodge was a high class man. It is true that he was married to an Indian lady and after her death to another Indian lady. The third point was that they could never have made yoked oxen swim a river. The last point loses fored when it is remembered that if the actors could have done it the pioneers would not have had much trouble.

Of course the merit of the play, The Covered Wagon, depends upon the art of the author and the actors. I have the letter that Jim McLaughlin wrote to his brother after he had arrived in the gold fields of California having put in the summer of 1844 in crossing plains in just such a manner. McLaughlin says that he has nothing to write home about further than to let them know that he got across.

In this particular play however, there is considerable local interest. There have been no less than three Jim Bridgers in this county and the name is preserved in no less than 3 places, Bridger Gap, Bridger Mountain, and the Bridger Place. The first James Bridger was killed in Bridger Gap while scouting by the Iroquois Indians in 1779. Another James Bridger married Sally Gay and cleared the Bridger place at the tunnel. This was the father of James Bridger, of Fort Bridger. Old Mrs. Robert Gay the grandmother of the hero of Fort Bridger was visiting her daughter at the Bridger Place. She was a very old lady and she accidentally upset a beehive and the bees stung her to death.

The other point of interest in the play is that every mature citizen remembers when this entire county depended for transportation upon the covered wagon.

I can very well remember when the height of my ambition was to own a covered wagon. Every farmer who had a covered wagon could take a trip and make about twenty dollars clear money in a week's pleasurable excitement. The only cash outlay was the toll on the Bath county roads which amounted to $2 40 for one round trip and that in the days when Back Creek. Knapps Crreek and Jacksons River were unbridged. There were three mighty mountains to be crossed: Allegheny, Back Creek Mountain and Warm Springs mountain The railway depot was Millboro, Virginia. Other parts of the county hauled from Ronceverte. Huttonsville and Staunton, but Millboro was the most popular port of entry for the county seat of Pocahontas.

The trip took five days, and that meant four nights camping out. Wagons starting on Monday and Tuesday were sure of convenial company and a wagon train was formed and many were the lasting friendships formed in those days of wagoning across thee mountains in the white topped schooners of that day and time. The tariff was a dollar a hundred and a good team could bring in about twenty-five hundred pounds.

The horses were well cared for. Highly fed and thoroughly curried and attended to. The teams came back without a sign of distress in all cases where the wagoner knew his business, and it was a profession in itself. I do not think that I have ever been put to the task of learning a more intricate trade in so short a time as I was compelled to do as a part of a wagon train.

The camping places were well marked and the one great essential was good water. Probably there is no place in the world where there is a road with as many atttractive springs as there are on the forty-six miles from Marlinton to Millboro Every few miles there is delightful water.

The first wagon that we got on our farm was a tar skein. This was the old fashioned wagon and tar was the lubricant used. The thimble skein was invented and it was a great improvement. On it was used the modern axle grease.

Without the canvass cover the cargo would have been at the mercy of every summer shower so the main sheet was essential and no merchant would have chartered a wagon without it.

The merchant advanced freight money but the wagoner if he was the casual kind that make a few odd trips as a diversion was supposed to trade out the compensation in the store. Breakage was not governed by any certain rules The wagoner got out of liability the best he could. I remember that I broke seventeen glass fruit jars one trip and paid for them over the protest of the merchant who made that amount very low. I did not try to get out of it, and I think that must have impressed the storekeeper for he wanted to call it square without damage money.

At that time there was an agreeble freight agent at Millboro, a Mr. Talley, who took the greatest pleasure in accommodating the wagoners and helping them load and stow their goods. That man never knew what a following of loya friends he had in Pocahontas County. I venture to say that for anything in the gift of a great county like Pocahontas, he would but have to intimate and it would have been granted freely. Most of his great friends have passed on but there are still some of us here who hold his kindness and friendly interest in grateful remembrance.

It was in the whiskey epoch following the Civil War when a man could drink it or leave it alone and Bath was a whiskey county. Even in those days it seemed to us that as compared to the prohibition county of Pocahontas and the wet county of Bath that there was a curse on the traffic. The most trusted wagoners were charged with bringing in consignments of whiskey. And most of them would take a little for the stomachache, but it goes without saying that the piloting of a covered wagon over the precipitous mountains kept most within bounds, and if there came a case of temporary incapacity, he was skidded in his wagon, and some passenger or perhaps the boy along with his pa for a trip had the proud duty of being in charge of the wagon and cargo.

After I had graduated from the wagon train and was in the printing business here our press ink of about the consistency of tar was sent us in wooden five gallon kegs and these generally came in with gimet holes under the hoops where there had been explorations by thirsty men.

I noticed the other day in the Covered Wagon that the folks seemed to sleep in the wagons and to my mind that is an error, for there is no wagon laden with miscellaneous freight that has room for any one to sleep under the canvas It was possible for a sleeping place to be preserved say in a solid load of salt, but even in that case the odd bundles of horse feed did not leave room. The wagoner slept on the ground under neath the wagon. It would not do to sleep anywhere else near his horses for he might be trampled My vivid recollection is waking in the gray of the morning with my opening eyes about six inches through the wheel from the hoofs of the horses.

In those days the housewives of this county made a specialty of "flat bread" designed to keep fresh and good for a week for the wagon box. No other bread was taken. It was a sort of biscuit bread and it did not crumble and get stale or hard like yeast bread or salt rising. The other essential was coffee. The kind of coffee that wagoners made would float an egg and elevate the soul. Bacon was another item. Then such other delicacies as the lady of the house in her goodness might see fit to pack up for the old man.

My recollection is that the grub tasted mighty good at the camping places. It is a matter of some regret that we did not have the esteem of the country that we travelled through Never was there a petty depredation but what it was laid at the door of the wagoners. As matter of fact about all that we have did to devastate the country was to burn fence rails in camp fires but that was mighty little compared to the trade that we brought to the country

I had not more than got the bang of the thing when I was taken off the farm, and I remember that I was not to be named in the same list with hundreds of experienced wagoners who could make the trip with ease effeciency. But I did make enough trips to get some idea of the true inwardness of the trade.

Fred Beard was a young fellow of my own age and I learned more about wagoning from him than anyone else. His father was county and circuit clerk and had fitted his son out with a wagon and team and he was on the road most of the season and I made several trips in wagon trains in his company. He has always been an exceedingly kind and accommodating man and he showed me more than anyone else about the ways of the road.

The most trying experience that I ever had on the road was at Jackson River We came to it one night when it was in flood and lay there and the next morning decided to cross it. The wagons followed each other and the horses acted splendidly. The water was just up to the bed of the wagon In my case, when the team got in the middle of the river one of the singletrees got loose and I had to jump out in the river, retrieve the horse, and back him into place and hook on the singletree and drive on out. It was not so much of a job for I lived on the banks of the Greenbrier River and was riverbred, and was not afraid of high water.

In the old days in the west it is apparent that the Covered Wagon was possible in the treeless plains from the first. Not so on the Western Waters. The wooded slopes prevented the Covered Wagon from being used. A wagon would have spared the pioneers nine-tenths of their hardships

In the mountains there were plenty of trails made by the Indians whose occupancy had extended over many hundred years, and these were good bridle-paths, but pack animals could not be used for the long trips because they could not carry feed enough for the packhorses. So the pioneer into these wilds had to come in by himself in the spring carrying an axe, a rifle, some fishing hooks, and an augur, and build a cabin and raise a crop of corn, and then return for his family. Then the family came with a cow and a horse, and some plunder, and founded an aristocracy of the mountains

It was a matter of years before the wagon appeared in the wilderness settlements. The sled was the important vehicle. The rule was to raise the crops on the hillside and sled them down to the house in the hollow of the hills. The tradition is that the first wagon to come to Pocahontas County was carried in on packhorses for use on the Clover Lick farm by Major Jacob Warwick.

And this I can testify to that in 1892, I heard a most intelligent and estimable woman say that she had been out to Mingo and saw a wagon This lady was grey headed when she told me that. And I think she said it in all seriousness for I do not think that there was a wagon in her immediate community, and she had not been away from home very much.

But it appears that in the great plains of the west that the wagons go with the first settlers carrying all the comforts of a home from the very start.

In the James McLaughlin letter it appears that from Missouri to the gold fields that it took thirteen weeks steady travelling to make, and they must have averaged pretty well up to twenty miles a day. It would seem that men, horses, and mules would step out pretty steadily on account of the fact that food and feed would be used whether the train travelled or not. Anyway the Argonaut, Jim McLaughlin, did not consider that it was anything to write home about.

DILLINGHAM DRAWS 10 YEARS

Sentence of 10 years in Atlanta prison was passed upon Dan Dillingham, former Fayette lumber man and his two partners, Otto Beigle and J. W. Smith, who were convicted of misuse of the mails in connection with the sale of an oil lease to C. A. Croft, of Madison, who claimed he had been defrauded of $7000 by the four men.

Notice of appeal was filed by counsel for the four, who were lodged in the county jail after sentence had been passed

The joint indictment contained four counts. Each drew a five year sentence on the first count, charging use of mails to further a scheme to defraud; three years on the second count, charging the mailing of a personal check to Mr. Croft; and one year on the last two counts, charging use of the mails for exchange of checks between the defendants in connection with the deal.

A verdict of guilty was returned by the district court jury after three minutes deliberation

It was claimed by the defendant that the lease sold Mr. Croft, located in Meigs county Ohio, had a commercial value. It was first purchased by Smith, who sold it to Dillingham for $1500 The lease was then sold to Croft for $7000, who charged he had been led to believe he could sell the property for $17,000.

Beigle and Tincher were indicted several months ago in intermediate court of Kanawha county on a charge of defrauding a foreigner at Belle, by selling him a worthless lease in Kentucky. During the trial of these charges against them in district court the government produced witnesses who testfied they had been victims of frauds, perpetrated by the defendants

Dillingham and his associates tried to work their scheme in this county in connection with a deal for some timber land. They spent several days in Fayettevilla, but their intended victims failed to bite.—Fayette Tribune.

—For a number of years Dillingham was a resident of Pocahontas county. He was employed as a lumber inspector at Millpoint and Mt. Grove and afterwards operated some portable mill jobs. He is a native of North Carolina.

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FIDUCIARY NOTICE

The accounts of T. D Moore, administrator of the estate of George C. Moore, deceased, are before the undersigned Commissioner of Accounts for final settlement.

All parties interested will please take notice November 24, 1924.

T. S McNeel, Commissioner

NOTICE

All who are indebted to the Marlinton & Cloverlick Mutual Telephone Company, please pay by December 15th, or it will be put out for collection.

H. H. Waugh, Pres.

Chas Shinaberry, Sec.

NOTICE

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Will practice in the courts of Pocahontas and Greenbrier counties, and in the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia.

ANDREW PRICE
Attorney-at-Law
Marlinton, W. Va

N. C. McNEEL,
Attorney-at-Law,
Marlinton, W. Va.
Will practice in the courts of Pocahontas and adjoining counties, and in the Court of Appeals of the state of West Virginia.

L. M. McCLINTIC,
Attorney-at-Law,
Marlinton, W. Va.
Will practice in the courts of Pocahontas and adjoining counties and in the Supreme Court of Appeals

P. T. WARD
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